

XXXI.—*Notes on the Nesting of the Pomatorhine Skua.*

By C. BOYCE HILL.

(Plate XI.)

IN his notes on the Birds observed on the Yenisei river (Ibis, 1897, p. 107), Mr. H. L. Popham has briefly mentioned that we found three nests of the Pomatorhine Skua; but inasmuch as comparatively little is known respecting the breeding of this species, and as, I believe, we are the only Englishmen who have handled the eggs *in situ*, there may, perhaps, be some excuse for further remarks to accompany the illustration (Plate XI.).

On our way down the Yenisei, the steamer which was towing us fortunately ran ashore on one of the numerous sandbanks which abound in this river. I say fortunately, because it enabled us to discover this Skua nesting. After having enquired the probable duration of our stoppage, Popham and I agreed to explore the small islands near at hand—a group named the Brekotsky. We took one each, and on mine, a large flat marsh, I observed a Pomatorhine Skua, which was presently joined by another. The birds did not appear at all demonstrative nor to resent intrusion, like the Long-tailed Skuas, so I thought they could not be nesting. But after much searching and watching, I observed one settle right in the centre of the marsh, so at once proceeded to the spot; the bird rose when I was within a few yards of it, and to my delight I saw the nest with two eggs. I waited a few moments for the Skua to come within shot, and killed it; after pursuing its mate, I captured that also.

The nest was a mere depression in the ground, on a spot rather drier than the surrounding marsh, and to reach it I was at times up to my knees in swamp, so that, had it not been for a foundation of ice at a depth of from 18 inches to 2 feet from the surface, I do not think I should have been able to record this event. I also found nesting on this island some Scaup Ducks and Red-necked Phalaropes. In the evening Popham and I together visited another part of the island, and were rewarded by discovering, under similar conditions, another nest of the Pomatorhine Skua containing two eggs; and there also the only other birds we observed nesting were Scaups



EGGS of the POMATORHINE SKUA.

Keenan & Prall

and Red-necked Phalaropes. A few days later we discovered a third nest of this Skua on the mainland in a much drier situation, making in all six eggs of this bird. I might add that in each instance the eggs were slightly incubated.

The figures in Plate XI. have been taken from drawings made by Mrs. Boyce Hill. The upper figures represent specimens in my collection, and the lower are those of specimens in that of Mr. Popham.

The measurements of the eggs as given by Mr. Popham in 'The Ibis' (1897, p. 107) are 2.35 to 2.65 inches by 1.79 to 1.86.*

XXXII.—*Proceedings at the Anniversary Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Union, 1900.*

THE Annual General Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Union was held at the rooms of the Zoological Society of London, 3 Hanover Square (by permission of the Council of that Society), on Wednesday, the 16th May, at 5.30 P.M., Mr. F. DUCANE GODMAN, F.R.S., President, in the Chair.

The minutes of the last Annual Meeting having been read and confirmed, the Report of the Committee was read. It stated that the Union had suffered the loss of eleven Members by death since the last Anniversary. These were:—Mr. John Cordeaux, Dr. Elliott Coues, Mr. H. B. Hewetson, Lord Hylton, Mr. E. L. Layard, Prof. Alphonse Milne-Edwards, Prof. St. George Mivart, F.R.S., Mr. T. J. Monk, Mr. E. M. H. Riddell, Mr. F. B. Simson, and Dr. A. C. Stark.

Five Members had withdrawn, and one Member had been removed (under the operation of Rule 6) for non-payment of his subscription.

* [Middendorff appears to have been the first to obtain authenticated eggs of this species, and the figure of a specimen from the Taimyr Tundras is given in his 'Sibirische Reise' (pl. xxiv. fig. 1), while a better illustration of an example taken by Middendorff in the same district has been given by Prof. Newton (P. Z. S. 1861, pl. xxxix. fig. 3). We are not aware of any other figures of authenticated specimens up to the time of Messrs. Popham and Hill. After comparing their genuine eggs with the specimen taken on Berg Island, Novaya Zemlya, and ascribed to this species (Man. Brit. B. 1st ed. p. 736), Col. Feilden and Saunders are of opinion that the last is probably an unusually large egg of *S. crepidatus*.

—EDD.]